United Nations A/C.3/56/9

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 November 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Third Committee
Agenda item 112
Advancement of women

Letter dated 27 November 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I take pleasure in enclosing, also on behalf of the Permanent Representatives of Sweden and Luxembourg, a letter dated 13 November 2001, signed by the Foreign Ministers of Sweden, Luxembourg and Austria, addressed to you (see enclosure), as well as an attached document on the topic "Women and Human Security", which emanated from a meeting of fifteen women Foreign Ministers held in New York on 12 November 2001.

I would appreciate it if you can arrange for the present letter and its enclosure to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 112.

(*Signed*) Gerhard **Pfanzelter**
Ambassador

01-66441 (E) 291101

Enclosure to the letter dated 27 November 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We take pleasure in enclosing a document on the topic "Women and Human Security", which emanated from the meeting of fifteen women Foreign Ministers held in New York on 12 November 2001 (see annex).

We would appreciate it if you would arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 112.

(*Signed*) Benita **Ferrero-Waldner**
Foreign Minister of Austria

(*Signed*) Lydie **Polfer**
Foreign Minister of Luxembourg

(*Signed*) Anna **Lindh**
Foreign Minister of Sweden

Annex

We are writing as the Foreign Ministers of fifteen Member States of the United Nations and as concerned women. As in the past, we have taken advantage of the General Assembly's Ministerial week to jointly review and articulate issues on our global agenda that have a special bearing on the potential and the condition of women in our societies and on a global scale. This year's deliberations focused on "Women and Human Security".

Developments in the post-cold-war era had a profound impact on our nations' understanding of security. Borders were seen as ever less capable of containing new types of threats to human beings and to "human security".

All main dimensions of "human security" — economic, food, health, environmental, personal, gender, community and political — have been directly related to fundamental concerns of women.

While women are instrumental in formulating appropriate responses to human development, in particular with regard to food supply, public health and environment, education, community development and good governance, women are also particularly vulnerable when human security is violated. Women have been among the primary victims of food deficits, economic crises, new health threats, environmental degradation, violence, failing societies and, in the case of corruption, governmental decay.

National and international policies need to be more cognizant of the central role that women can assume in implementing human security policies as well as of the fact that women are primarily affected by threats to human security.

The Security Council, in its resolution 1325 (2000), set out a broad range of policy guidelines with regard to the role of women in decision-making, conflict prevention and conflict resolution as well as in post-conflict peace-building, societal reconstruction and the development of lasting solutions. It stressed the need for enhancing the role of women in international peace operations.

The community of nations needs policies that respond more vigorously to these new challenges, threats and opportunities, in particular:

- Women-focused human development projects should be expanded, especially in least developed regions and sectors of society, and in conflict and post-conflict societies;
- International assistance programmes and cooperation should assure the full and active participation of women in the reconstruction of society and in economic development with equity and equality;
- The potential of women in contributing to peace and reconciliation in intra-societal conflict and strife should be further enhanced. In dialogues at the local level, the United Nations should include women and men on an equal basis, thus enabling United Nations operations to meet the needs of all members of the local population and ensuring that women are not discriminated against;
- In recognition of the central role women play as a cohesive force in societies and their contribution to effective governance, conscious efforts are needed to empower women through education and, in particular, through human rights

education and learning to assume enhanced responsibilities at all levels of society and government;

- In the design of United Nations peacekeeping mandates, as well as of United Nations peace operations and humanitarian assistance, a proper gender perspective has become indispensable;

- Reinforced efforts are required by Governments, national and international civil society, religious communities and political movements to combat violence against women and to prevent their victimization under conditions of lawlessness; further research must be undertaken about the fundamental causes of violence against women in order to obtain a better understanding of this phenomenon and to combat it with effectiveness;

- New public health policies should empower women and address them as partners, in particular in the application of preventive measures.

Mr. Secretary-General, we are fully convinced that human development towards human security can be achieved only in societies that grant and protect the human rights of women. Not least, the quality of our societies is defined by the multiple dimensions of human security of women.

We thank you for your leadership on these issues, which we believe to be of central importance to the totality of our societies.

We ask that you circulate the present letter as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Arta **Dade**
Albania

(*Signed*) Benita **Ferrero-Waldner**
Austria

(*Signed*) Billie Antoinette **Miller**
Barbados

(*Signed*) Maria Soledad **Alvear Valenzuela**
Chile

(*Signed*) Maria Eugenia **Brizuela de Avila**
El Salvador

(*Signed*) Mahawa **Bangoura Camara**
Guinea

(*Signed*) Antonieta Rosa **Gomes**
Guinea-Bissau

(*Signed*) Lydie **Polfer**
Luxembourg

(*Signed*) Ilinka **Mitreva**
Macedonia

(*Signed*) Lila **Ratsifandrihamanana**
Madagascar

(*Signed*) Hon. Lilian **Patel**
Malawi

(*Signed*) Aichatou **Mindaoudou**
Niger

(*Signed*) Nkosazana **Dlamini-Zuma**
South Africa

(*Signed*) Maria E. **Levens**
Suriname

(*Signed*) Anna **Lindh**
Sweden